

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

By voting to reduce by \$17,000 item 1 of the Treasury Board estimates, my hon. friend in effect was showing that he lacked confidence in me. He may remember that the House of Commons supported my position at that time; and the government has no overall majority in this house.

When a decision has been reached—and it is an important decision, I agree—the announcement will be made in the house. We shall take whatever action we think is possible and acceptable, bearing in mind always the circumstances that the people of Canada and the civil servants of Canada find themselves in at that time.

Mr. Knowles: But when will that be?

NATIONAL DEFENCE—ONTARIO REGULATIONS
RESPECTING VOTING BY MILITARY
PERSONNEL

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew North): Mr. Speaker, several days ago I raised a question in the house which dealt with the Ontario election act as it relates to the regulations governing the voting procedures of military personnel, wherever they may be, in Canada or in other parts of the world. First of all I would like to outline briefly the actual voting procedure for military personnel in an Ontario election.

Well in advance of a provincial election it is my understanding that the chief electoral officer in Ontario asks defence headquarters to submit a list of names of those members of the armed forces who have indicated their place of ordinary residence to be in Ontario. In this recent Ontario election I believe that officials of the defence department sent a list containing 34,000 names to the chief electoral officer.

The Department of National Defence is not required under provincial regulations to make up lists on a constituency basis, such as is done for federal elections. The names therefore, of all members of the armed forces who vote in the 117 constituencies of Ontario are simply sent forward in one massive list. The chief electoral officer of the province then asks D.N.D. to estimate the number of potential Ontario voters that are attached to each unit in Canada and to other units elsewhere in the world. In order that the estimated figures will not be too low, the estimate is increased by 10 per cent. After receiving this estimate from D.N.D. the chief electoral officer then forwards their requested number of ballot application cards to the various units. I presume that the province of Ontario forwards the ballot application cards

directly to those bases within the borders of the province, and it is my understanding that D.N.D. facilitates the distribution of the ballot application cards elsewhere. It is also my understanding that each unit then posts notices to inform its personnel that the ballot application cards are available for any qualified person wishing to vote in the forthcoming provincial election.

The personnel concerned must then fill out these cards and they are returned to the chief electoral officer. The electoral officer staff then checks each application card with the list of names that they have received from the Department of National Defence.

Suppose John Doe is stationed in Zoest, Germany. Suppose he has indicated on a form, which he may fill out once each year, that his place of ordinary residence for voting purposes was to be a particular location in Ontario. When his ballot application card was compared with his name, and information on the master list from the D.N.D., and this comparison did in fact show that he had a vote in an Ontario constituency, then John Doe would receive a ballot by mail from the chief electoral officer. He would then vote and return the ballot to its place of origin.

To add to the difficulties of this procedure, the Ontario election act infers, according to reports and complaints that I have received so profusely, that any person who has resided in the province for 12 months qualifies for a vote. But it does not go on to say anything about the special regulations that have been laid down to D.N.D. by the chief electoral officer of the province in regard to the special arrangements for voting on the part of members of the armed forces. There is a point in question here, and it has come up many times.

Can a member of the armed forces who has lived in a civilian residence for 12 months be enumerated in the usual manner along with his wife and can he vote at the local civilian poll, even though he has designated a place outside Ontario as his place of ordinary residence? On the other hand, a member of the armed forces who lives on a military base could be resident there for two years, or any number of years, but does not have a vote in the riding in which the base is located unless he has specifically indicated that riding as his place of ordinary residence.

At this point I want to quote from the routine order that went out to units from D.N.D.:

A member of regular forces may be enumerated and vote at civilian poll in Ontario in accordance